

Folkestone

Location, Parking and Access

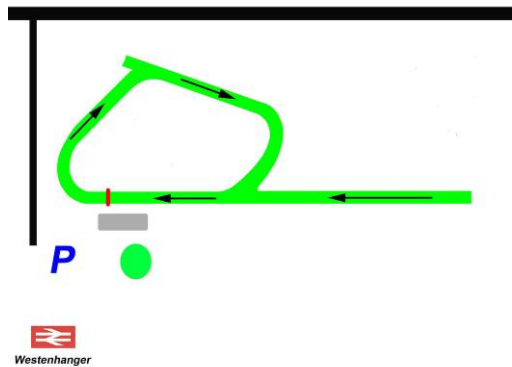


Located five miles from Folkestone the course is close to the M20 (J11) and it is clearly signposted from the junction. The access road from the A20 to the course itself is narrow so caution is advised, especially when passing the row of cottages where there invariably parked cars. One peeve is that far too many racegoers park in the lane as opposed to the official car park, which does add to the congestion. Hopefully this is something that will be addressed by the local constabulary.

Parking is free and on grass.

Westenhanger station is adjacent to the course with a half hourly service from Charing Cross in London, journey time about 1½ hours. Or the high speed rail link can be taken to Ashford, from where a local train can be caught to Westenhanger.

Course Layout



Folkestone stages both jump and flat fixtures.

The main course is pear shaped , 1 mile 3 furlongs in diameter and is right handed (clockwise). There is an extension to the home straight accommodating races of 5 and 6 furlongs.

There are some gentle undulations throughout and the home straight has a gentle rise to the line. The course does not seem to favour long striding types. Indeed with a canny jockey on board short runners often do well at the course.

The course can become tricky and slippery when wet.

Draw Advantage: A low draw can be a distinct advantage in sprints, especially when the stalls are on the stands side. In races over 1m 1f and 1m 2f low drawn runners also have an edge. (was the opposite way round prior to the 2011 season when the stall numbering system changed)

Admission

Folkestone operates a single main enclosure policy (£17 - £20). There is a picnic enclosure £5 a car plus £5 per person.

Annual membership: £175

The dress code at the course is smart casual. (2011 prices)

Discounts: Seniors **Students** **Group**

Overview



Like a number of courses the most attractive part of the main enclosure is situated behind, as opposed to in front of, the stands. There is a magnificent lawned area dominated by an impressive water feature and a number of large trees, providing welcome respite from the hot summer sun.

On the business side of things there are two main stands (although there is also a third, seemingly disused, stand as well). The first stand is the old members stand offering relatively steep tiered viewing. At the top is a fantastic, intimate, bar which is very welcoming on a cold, winter afternoon. The bar also has a balcony giving a view of the parade ring.



Old Members Stand



Main Stand

The main stand is tiered with less steep stepping than the old members stand, offering good views of the course.

The area in front of the main stand is mainly concrete whilst the area in front of the old members stand is predominantly grass. There are some 14 garden benches on the lawn area, however these were all taken well over an hour before racing and woe betide anybody who tried to move in on what was seemingly a spare space.

The course enclosure is rather sparse with a single basic building and no shelter, so it will be a matter of sitting in the car if the rain starts.

Although born in Portsmouth one of Kent's most renowned residents was Charles Dickens, famed for, amongst other works, A Tale Of Two Cities. It could be argued that Folkestone is A Tale Of Two Racecourses.

My initial visits to this course had only been to flat meetings and, if you would be so kind as to excuse the pun, I found the atmosphere to be somewhat flat, even when the crowds were big. However attend a National Hunt fixture and the atmosphere is exactly what you would expect and want. Folkestone certainly comes into its own when the jumpers are out. I mean that literally as well as metaphorically, as being not too far from the coast it is not uncommon for a chill wind to wend its way through the enclosures.

With stewards wearing Lingfield Park blazers you are left in no doubt that Folkestone is under the same ownership as Lingfield and this knowledge adds to some of the disappointment with Folkestone. One of the great plus points for Lingfield is the profusion of signs around the course and good plans in the racecard – there are none of these at Folkestone and for those, like me, who are not regulars this is a distinct disadvantage. Especially when arriving, legs firmly crossed, after a three hour drive on a hot day, during which three bottles of water have been drunk. Enough said!

Folkestone is a charming track and seems to attract decent sized crowds, which is impressive as I'm sure the nearby beaches must have been a strong counter attraction on this very hot Saturday afternoon.

Folkestone has, in some quarters, acquired a reputation of being a backwater course. All I can say is this must be spread by those who have not visited it. With beautiful grounds the viewing is good, OK the quality of racing is not top draw but it provides all year racing for a keen local audience.

It is in a good location, close to the motorway network, although the final country lane approach brings you back down to earth quite quickly.

All in all a good local track and a good day out just make sure you find out where the toilets are before you actually need them.

Catering

The main restaurant is the Lookout Restaurant, packages are £46 or £53 (depending on the day) if booked in advance or £52 or £58.50 on the day. The quality of food is good and the service is friendly. Viewing of the round course is good, although most of the straight extension is blocked from view.

The Bistro has been replaced by the new Seahorse Restaurant, which as its name implies is a seafood establishment. Main courses are available from £6.25 through to £10.95, catering for all tastes. Starters are

available from £3.20 - £4.95 and desserts are £3.50.

On the mobile front there was a unit offering Aberdeen Angus burgers with various accompaniments for around the £4 mark, with fries an extra £2.00. Although at some meetings there are no mobile units.

When visited in April 2011 there were no mobile units however there was a unit inside selling hot Pork baps for £4.50 and pasties from £3.60 - £3.90. However, despite it being a very quiet day crowd wise they still managed to sell out of pork by the third race and they only had a few of the more exotic pasties left.

Bitter and lager were both priced at £3.40 and water was £1.50 a bottle.

Ancillaries

Bookmakers

Around 18 bookmakers ply their trade in the main enclosure with a single bookmaker struggling to earn a crust in the course enclosure. Betting is to an average over round of a modest 1.8%

Racecard

Costing £2.50 the racecard, frankly, isn't much to write home about. Basic and just about functional would be the best description. What is inexplicable is the lack of any plan of the facilities, which is almost inexcusable.

Toilets

Discreetly tucked away is probably the best description. Questionable if there are enough to cope with numbers on the busier days. Also I am not sure if it is because I failed to find all the facilities but there did seem to be more ladies facilities than gents, which is unusual for a racecourse.

Parade Ring





The absence of seating or tiered viewing is not a major issue as the parade ring is large enough to allow plenty of viewing. Full of mature trees it is a pretty parade ring. There is a separate winners enclosure and the pre-parade ring is situated behind the parade ring.

Non Racing Attractions

Very close to the channel tunnel, bring your passport and throw in a quick shopping trip to France.

The Kent coast is littered with resorts catering for most tastes and there are plenty of historical sites in reasonably close proximity.

Contact Details

	www.folkestone-racecourse.co.uk
	01303 266 407
	Folkestone Racecourse Stone Street Westenhanger Nr Hythe Kent CT21 4HX

Ownership	Arena
------------------	-------

Fixtures 2012*Jump*

January 2nd , 17th & 31st

February 14th & 29th

May 17th (eve)

November 20th

December 4th & 18th

Flat

April 5th , 12th & 24th

May 3rd & 30th

June 11th & 29th

July 12th & 26th

August 12th & 23rd

September 2nd , 18th & 25th

October 2nd

Inspection Dates

<i>Date</i>	<i>Weather</i>	<i>Type</i>
02/06/07	Very hot and sunny	6 Flat
24/10/07	Overcast with a cool breeze	7 Jump
10/04/08	Sunny	6 Flat
31/03/09	Sunny	7 Flat midweek
07/06/10	Sunny and warm becoming overcast	6 Flat midweek
04/04/11	Overcast becoming sunny, very windy	7 flat midweek